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SUBJECT: HIGH LEVEL MEETING OF DONORS ON THE HUMANITARIAN
SITUATION IN SUDAN

Classified By: Ambassador Susan E. Rice, reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary - Meeting in New York April 16 to address the increasingly complex operating environment for aid agencies in Sudan, 17 donors from North America, Europe and Asia gave their general support to the UN Track III approach outlined in the document "Towards a more predictable, accountable, and efficient aid delivery system in Sudan (North)". All agreed on the importance of reinforcing the Joint Communique and engaging countries of influence (China, Sudan's neighbors, and members of the Arab League and African Union) to hold the GoS to higher standards on supporting humanitarian aid operations. The donor group backed the UN call for a more robust accountability framework, principally through a reinforced High Level Committee. Donors questioned the UN's ability to increase the effectiveness of aid machinery through enhanced responsibilities for the cluster system. The group supported the idea of a high-level, biannual gathering of donors and countries of influence to review the direction of aid operations in Sudan and as a means to pressure the GoS to honor its commitments to facilitate aid to vulnerable populations. The UN encouraged donor countries to wield their political muscle to support the humanitarian architecture in Sudan. End Summary.

12. (C) The government of Canada working through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) hosted a high-level meeting of donors on the humanitarian situation in Sudan on April 16 at the Canadian consulate in New York. The following donors attended the gathering: Canada (Chair), Denmark, the European Commission, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Republic of Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and the United States. The acting Assistant Administrator for USAID's Bureau of Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA), Dirk Dijkerman, headed the U.S. delegation to the meeting. U.S. Special Envoy for Sudan, Scott Gration, briefed the group on his recent trip to Sudan. UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, John Holmes, participated in the event. Briefings were also provided by Ms. Ameera Haq via teleconference, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Sudan, and a representative of the international NGO community in Sudan.

The UN Lays Out the Situation

13. (C) Holmes explained that the expulsion of the NGOs presents the international community with huge challenges. UN actions must be balanced between meeting the immediate humanitarian needs of vulnerable populations in Sudan and the urgency of negotiating with the GoS to restore reliability and accountability to an increasingly fragile aid delivery system. Holmes expressed concern that the GoS decision to

remove NGOs from its territory could serve as a negative precedent for other countries who hold a dim view of humanitarian agencies. Referring to the UN's 3-Track approach to managing the crisis, Holmes noted that OCHA would continue to push the GoS to reverse its expulsion order knowing that any change in policy will be unlikely. In Holmes' view, pressure from the Security Council, donors, neighboring countries and regional organizations such as the African Union and Arab League has encouraged the GoS to show greater flexibility in dealing with the aftermath of the expulsion order.

¶4. (C) On Track II (filling critical, life-saving gaps), Holmes remarked that the expulsion order did not lead to an instant crisis, but that there are grave concerns for impact on the health and welfare of the displaced in Darfur over the coming weeks and months, especially with regards to sanitation and health care. The UN must now balance the need to fill urgent gaps in humanitarian assistance with the necessity of rebuilding the operating environment shattered by the GoS action against aid agencies. Holmes sees the need to move simultaneously along Track II and Track III (re-negotiating with the GoS a more robust, reliable operating environment for humanitarian assistance).

¶5. (C) Holmes stated that the UN plans to start discussion with the GoS next week. He called for strong, sustained and consistent support from the international community in re-building the humanitarian architecture in Sudan. For any progress in dealing with the GoS, it will be vital for donors to stay as united as possible. Donors need to add their political muscle to support the humanitarian machinery. He

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noted that the UN has been and will continue to work with traditional donors as well as countries of influence, like China and Sudan's neighbors, to build a more resilient system for the delivery of humanitarian aid in Sudan. He remarked that it would also be important to reach out to regional bodies such as the African Union and the League of Arab States. Holmes closed by reminding the donors that there is great need for progress on peace talks and that only a broad political settlement will ultimately solve the humanitarian crisis in Darfur.

¶6. (C) Holmes presented donors with the need for additional funds to fill gaps created by the expelled NGOs and cope with the additional requirements for coordination and planning. He suggested that this could be accomplished through a Flash Appeal, individual agency appeals, contributions to the Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF) or the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF).

Special Envoy Gration Briefs on Trip to Sudan

¶7. (C) SE Scott Gration told donors that President Obama advised him to seek creative alternatives in talks with the GoS in order to save lives and mitigate the suffering of vulnerable populations in Sudan. His travels to Abyei, Zam Zam camp in North Darfur highlighted significant tensions and major humanitarian challenges that will only get worse if not addressed in a timely fashion. Gration described close cooperation with the UN in seeking solutions to the humanitarian crisis caused by the GoS expulsion of NGOs and backed the goals of the 3-Track approach in talks with the GoS. He left Sudan with agreement from the GoS on many points sought by the UN including a return to the Joint Communiqué and a more robust High Level Committee (including permanent representation from the US, UK and the EU). SE Gration remarked that the next step will be to turn words into action and that the international community should produce some carrots to encourage better cooperation from the GoS.

Donors Weigh In

¶18. (C) Donors reached a general consensus of the need to work jointly to address the challenges to the humanitarian operation in Sudan posed by the unilateral decision of the GoS to expel international NGOs from the country and close three national NGOs. The group endorsed the UN's plan for moving forward on Track III as outlined in the document "Towards a more predictable, accountable, and efficient aid delivery system in Sudan (North)". However, donors expect OCHA to augment its capacity to address new challenges and UN agencies must improve their performance. The UN must consult the NGO community when negotiating the new aid architecture. Donors generally agreed with the UN proposal to strengthen the cluster approach to improve the operating environment for NGOs, but had a number of questions about the details of how this would work in practice and the length of time needed to get the system up and running. Donors also raised questions about the UN discussion of pooled assets as a means to protect aid operations in the future. Pooled assets might work for some aid commodities, but would be more difficult for operational assets like vehicles and computer systems.

¶19. (C) The donors agreed to support the following points summarized by the chair: a) the importance to respect humanitarian principles in Sudan, b) the need for urgent action to avert a humanitarian crisis, c) the need to prevent the GoS action to expel NGOs from serving as a precedent that will encourage other governments to take similar steps, d) the importance to focus on needs in the Three Areas and the East of Sudan as well as Darfur, e) the need to de-politicize humanitarian aid while maintaining political support for a robust and principles humanitarian operation in Sudan, f) the need to focus on the implementation and monitoring of GoS commitments to facilitate aid operations, and g) the importance of unity among donors and common messages on expectations regarding the responsibilities of the GoS.

¶10. (C) On the issue of new financing for aid operations in Sudan, donors expressed a range of opinions but no one supported a flash appeal at this time. The UK felt that a flash appeal it would be too costly and draw OCHA staff away from more critical activities. The EU felt that individual agency appeals would fail to capture the big picture. Dijkerman stated that the US does not support a flash appeal,

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but that there is a need for a clear, prioritized gap-filling plan.

Further Actions for Donors

¶11. (C) Donors agreed to move forward on a number of action items resulting from the discussions at the meeting. Much discussion centered on the need to bring non-traditional donors and countries of influence into the process of re-building the shattered aid architecture in Sudan. The US and UK agreed to take the lead at capital level and in Khartoum to reach out to China, Sudan's neighbors, the African Union and Arab League to bolster efforts to pressure the GoS to honor its previous commitments to facilitate humanitarian operations in Sudan.

¶12. (C) Donors will develop common messaging on key issues including severance payments and seized assets. The donor group in Khartoum will handle this task in coordination with their headquarters.

¶13. (C) There is a need to develop standards for monitoring GoS actions on the facilitation of humanitarian operations in Sudan. The US will take the lead on developing a framework for monitoring GoS compliance with agreements (including those stemming from SE Gration's visit to Sudan).

¶14. (C) The concept of utilizing an enhance cluster approach

to improve the operating environment needs to be fleshed out with more detail, including timelines and milestones. OCHA will take the lead on this action.

¶15. (C) Donors generally agreed on the need for more regular high-level gatherings to monitor the situation in Sudan and develop joint responses to problems linked to humanitarian operations. No firm decisions were made at the New York meeting, but a bi-annual meeting was discussed as a possibility.

¶16. (C) John Holmes and SE Gration are scheduled for travel to Khartoum during the first week of May. The donor group endorsed the idea of holding the first meeting of an expanded High Level Committee (HLC) to coincide with their visits. OCHA will lead on setting up the HLC meeting.
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